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→GENERAL NOTES.←

The Wellhausen Hypothesis, a Question of Vital Consequence.—It has sometimes been said that this hypothesis does not affect the Christian faith in any vital way. It leaves the contents of the Scriptures unchanged. It is merely a question of order; whether that which has commonly been placed at the beginning, really belongs there or has its proper place at a later stage in the divine plan of guidance or instruction; whether the true order is first the law, then the psalms, then the prophets, or whether the prophets may not have preceded the law and the psalms; whether the law was all given at once in the infancy of the nation, or whether it may not have been gradually evolved as the changing necessities of Israel required. Why may not the divine authority of Deuteronomy and of the entire Pentateuch be the same, though the former was produced under Josiah and the latter reached its present form under Ezra, as though all had come, as we now have it, from the pen of Moses?

The serious aspect of the matter is that the truthfulness of the Scriptures is impugned at every step. If this hypothesis be true, the Scriptures are not what they represent themselves to be; the facts of the history are altogether different from that which they declare; their testimony is unreliable and untrustworthy. It requires great critical acumen to sift the evidence and extract the modicum of truth from the mass of fable. The inspiration and authority of the Old Testament are swept away entirely or can only be maintained in a very qualified sense. And as the New Testament is based upon the Old, how can the former be rationally defended, if its foundation in the latter is undermined and totters to its fall? How can our confidence in the Lord Jesus himself remain unshaken, if his declarations respecting Moses and his law are not to be trusted? The authors and chief promoters of the hypothesis do not disguise their hostility to supernatural religion. The denial of the truth of miracles and of prophecy is one of their primary principles, and is the corner-stone of their entire structure. The hypothesis is just an ingenious attempt to account for the Old Testament on purely naturalistic principles. The violence of the methods to which it is obliged to resort to compass this end, and the extravagant and incredible conclusions to which it leads, show how impossible is the task which it has proposed to itself.

The spirit and aims of those who urge this hypothesis do not, however, concern us at present. We have to do simply with the hypothesis itself and the arguments by which it is defended. In this brief course of lectures it will be impossible to deal thoroughly with this subject in its entire extent. It will be best to restrict our examination to a definite field; and I have selected for this purpose the sacred seasons of the Hebrews, as a theme interesting in itself and one upon which great stress has been laid in connection with this subject. It is generally agreed among the critics that the laws relating to the religious festivals of the Jews furnish one of the strongest supports for the view that the Mosaic institutions were not the product of one mind or of one age, but that they advanced from simple forms in primitive times to those which were more and more complex; and that the successive stages of the process can still be traced in the various enactments on this subject. The topic to which your attention will be re-

quested in the subsequent lectures of this course, then, will be the annual feasts of the Hebrews in their bearing upon the latest phase of Pentateuchal criticism. In the next lecture the endeavor will be made to trace the history of critical opinion in relation to these feasts.—*Wm. Henry Green, in The Hebrew Feasts.*

Notices of Egypt in Genesis X., 6, 13, 14.—"The sons of Ham : Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan" (Gen. x., 6). "And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Ananim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, and Pathrusim, and Casluhim (out of whom came Philistim) and Caphtorim."—Vs. 13, 14.

These are the first notices of Egypt which occur in Holy Scripture. The word Mizraim, which is here simply transliterated from the Hebrew, is elsewhere, except in 1 Chron. i., 8, uniformly translated by "Egypt," or "the Egyptians." It undoubtedly designates the country still known to us as Egypt; but the origin of the name is obscure. There is no term corresponding to it in the hieroglyphical inscriptions, where Egypt is called "Kam," or "Khem," "the Black (land)," or "Ta Mera," "the inundation country." The Assyrians, however, are found to have denominated the region "Muzur," or "Musr," and the Persians "Mudr," or "Mudraya," a manifest corruption. The present Arabic name is "Misr;" and it is quite possible that these various forms represent some ancient Egyptian word, which was in use among the people, though not found in the hieroglyphics. The Hebrew "Mizraim" is a dual word, and signifies "the two Mizrs," or "the two Egypts," an expression readily intelligible from the physical conformation of the country, which naturally divides itself into "Upper" and "Lower Egypt," the long narrow valley of the Nile, and the broad tract, known as the Delta, on the Mediterranean.

We learn from the former of the two passages quoted above that the Egyptian people was closely allied to three others, viz., the Cushite or Ethiopian race, the people known to the Hebrews as "Phut," and the primitive inhabitants of Canaan. The ethnic connection of ancient races is a matter rarely touched on by profane writers; but the connection of the Egyptians with the Canaanites was asserted by Eupolemus, and a large body of classical tradition tends to unite them with the Ethiopians. The readiness with which Ethiopia received Egyptian civilization lends support to the theory of a primitive identity of race; and linguistic research, so far as it has been pursued hitherto, is in harmony with the supposed close connection.

From the other passage (Gen. x., 13, 14) we learn that the Egyptians themselves were ethnically separated into a number of distinct tribes, or subordinate races, of whom the writer enumerates no fewer than seven. The names point to a geographic separation of the races, since they have their representatives in different portions of the Egyptian territory. Now this separation accords with, and explains, the strongly marked division of Egypt into "nomes," having conflicting usages and competing religious systems. It suggests the idea that the "nome" was the original territory of a tribe, and that the Egyptian monarchy grew up by an aggregation of nomes, which were not originally divisions of a kingdom, like counties, but distinct states, like the kingdoms of the Heptarchy. This is a view taken by many of the historians of ancient Egypt, derived from the facts as they existed in later times. It receives confirmation and explanation from the enumeration of Egyptian races—not a complete one, probably—which is made in this passage.—*From Rawlinson's Egypt and Babylon.*